

# Childcare



*'Every child matters'*

**Newsletter of the Brentwood Catholic Children's Society**

**RCN 1000661**

*Over 22 years of caring for children and their families.*

**Easter 2007**

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## *Farewell!*



*BCCS Director Frank Maguire, Louise Geddes, Chair of Trustees Colette Kelly,  
Deputy Director Eileen Campling and husband, Walter.*

Trustees, colleagues and well-wishers gathered at Childcare House last month to bid farewell to three members of staff moving on to pastures new.

Deputy Director Eileen Campling, Social Worker Louise Geddes and Fundraiser Nick Appleby were all guests of honour at the social evening to mark their departures.

The Society's Founder and Chaplain, Rt. Rev. Mgr. John Armitage, officiated at

the con-celebrated Mass of Thanksgiving in the Chapel which was attended by more than 50 family and well-wishers. Fr. John's homily, spoken without the aid of his spectacles, drew attention to identifying our own individual talents and then using them for the benefit of others.

Eulogies were spoken and presentations made before everyone adjourned for light refreshment in adjoining rooms.

More pictures will be found on page 3.

# *Impact of sexual orientation regulations on Catholic adoption agencies.*

*Announcement of the Government's proposed regulations concerning the sexual orientation of prospective adopters caused brief but voluble discussion throughout the media. Jim Richards, CEO of Catholic Children's Society (Westminster) outlines the impact and dilemmas now facing Catholic adoption agencies.*

## **WE ARE GOOD AT WHAT WE DO**

Catholic adoption agencies are good at what we do. One third of all placements made by voluntary agencies are made by our agencies. In 2004/5 we approved 176 adopters and placed 227 children. We have the lowest disruption rates over any other group of agencies (a disruption is when a child is placed with prospective adopters, prior to an adoption order, and where the placement is not working and the child has to return to local authority care). Our rate is 3.5%, other voluntary agencies 7.9% and local authorities 10%.

## **MARRIAGE IS BEST FOR CHILDREN**

Being cared for by a married couple is also best for children. Only 8% of children born into a married household see their parents split before their fifth birthday, whereas 53% born into cohabiting heterosexual households see their parents split. The figures for cohabiting same sex couples are even worse than those for cohabiting heterosexual couples.

## **SINGLE PEOPLE AS ADOPTERS**

Ever since the first Adoption Act in 1926, single people have been able to adopt. In assessing a single person we look for stability in their lives. If they are celibate and secure in that, then their orientation, whether heterosexual or homosexual, is no bar. However if they are sexually involved with another person we would not pursue their application. First, because that other person may not wish to adopt. Second the applicant clearly has other important things on his or her mind. We would therefore suggest they pause in relation to us and, if they wish, come back as a married couple.

## **NO CALL FOR GAY ADOPTERS**

Specific to the proposed regulations we have no wish to usurp the will of Parliament. Gay couples are legally able to be assessed now and will continue to be in the future, even if we are given an opt out. There are, after all, 150 other adoption agencies they can approach. We would be happy to accept a duty to refer onwards. It would be no great difficulty and is something we do already. For instance, we do not assess people who wish to adopt children from overseas but refer them to a local authority or specialist

adoption agency. No-one, by the way, suggests that is discrimination. Furthermore, we have never had a gay couple come to us to be assessed. Possibly that is not surprising but nor has any local authority said to us that a particular child's needs are gay parents.

## **OUR AGENCIES ARE NOT HOMOPHOBIC**

In pointing this out it is also necessary to state that we are not homophobic. Our position stems from our belief that it is only within marriage that the full physical expression of love should take place. Moreover, when assessing applicants one of the areas of discussion is to seek views on possible reactions should the child adopted, at some stage, indicate he or she is having difficulties in establishing a clear sexual identity whether that be gay or lesbian. If these discussions indicate that the adopters would be unhappy with this then we would not continue their assessment.

## **A PRECEDENT FOR EXEMPTION EXISTS**

Our call for an exemption has a precedent in abortion legislation where doctors and nurses do not have to carry out abortions on grounds of conscience. Also there are voluntary hospitals (St John and St Elizabeth) that whilst involved with maternity work do not perform abortions and yet receive money from the state in terms of tax and rate relief as a charity.

## **ADOPTION AGENCIES SUPPORTED BY VOLUNTARY FUNDS**

All the children placed with our adopters are in the care of local authorities. These authorities pay us an inter-agency fee when they choose one of our families. This fee by no means meets the costs of the works we do and we are dependant on voluntary contributions to maintain our adoption services.

## **THE CURRENT POSITION OF CATHOLIC AGENCIES**

Given that the Government have allowed Catholic Agencies 21 months to set up arrangements to meet the needs of the SOR, this means that Catholic agencies have until the end of 2008 to either change their policies, or to stop assessing. For without doing the former we will

not be able to be registered by the Commission for Social Care Inspection and without registration we are not legally able to operate. We have been told that there is to be an independent assessment of arrangements during this 21 month period. At the time of writing I have little idea as to what this means except one of its terms of reference states that it is hoped that *'The valuable expertise of faith-based adoption agencies in successfully placing the most vulnerable children, including the full range of post-adoption services is retained and developed'*. In the meantime we continue to assess adopters, and local authorities are placing children with our adopters. We welcome new applicants.

## **OUR DILEMMA**

The Government's inflexible stance creates for us a serious dilemma. Do we accept all applicants, or do we say no and stop assessing any and thereby reducing the numbers of children successfully adopted.

If we bow to the Government's Regulations we would in recruiting adopters, have to state that we accept gay couples, as well as those we accept at present. This would need to be clear in all our published literature and making public appeals at say, a church. We would not be able to state within the context of adoption, that it is our belief that a married couple is better for children than a gay couple. One needs to imagine the position committed Catholics would face in speaking to a group of sixth formers and extolling the virtues of marriage, with them rightly accusing the speaker of being a hypocrite because of our clearly conflicting policy of enabling children to be placed with an unmarried gay couple.

We can see in this a conflict of rights, the right of a gay couple to adopt, the right of an adoption agency to act according to their beliefs, the right of a child to have an informed choice as the environment in which he or she is to grow up and right of birth parents to express wishes and feelings about the future parents of their child. To date it is the rights of those who wish to adopt that have been enhanced to the detriment of those other rights. A just balance has not been struck.

*This article issued February 2007*

## First appointment



Director Frank Maguire, Louise Geddes and Colette Kelly, Chair of Trustees.

Louise Geddes was the current Director's first qualified practitioner appointment when she joined the Society in April 1999. She came from working with a children's disability team for Essex Social Services and her British Signing skills brought a new dimension to the Society's work. She leaves to take up a position with a private fostering agency.

## Ordered to Bath



Ann Davenport, Chair of Fundraising, Nick Appleby, Colette Kelly, Chair of Trustees and Frank Maguire, Director BCCS.

Fundraiser Nick Appleby's move to Bath leaves a gap in this all important area of the Society's activities.

Nick joined us shortly after leaving Lancaster University. He became involved organising various fund-raising events around the diocese as well as getting the Society's web site, [www.bccs.org.uk](http://www.bccs.org.uk), up and running. We wish him well in whatever the future offers him in the West Country.

## Newsletters

As you know, we produce our Newsletters to generally coincide with school terms. Because we are solely dependent upon the generosity of supporters around the diocese, it is incumbent upon us to try and keep everyone updated about what we are doing in your name. If you have any thoughts on how to improve either content or style of the Newsletter, please let us know.

## Eileen Campling

Eileen Campling joined the Society as Deputy Director in 2001 from Essex Social Services and was immediately involved in the development and progress of BCCS. She undertook lead roles in child protection matters, social work policies and staff training, as well as supervising the day-to-day professional practice of the Society's field staff.

She was held in the highest regard not only by her colleagues but also by other professionals in the field of child protection.

She leaves to take up the post of Child Protection Officer for the Religious Orders of England and Wales.



## Case Studies

Jake is 9 years old and lives with his Mum and three sisters. The family moved to this country from Africa last October. The referral identified that he was upset in School and was often in trouble. He threw chairs around the classroom and told his teacher that he did not know why he did this.

Jake was seen by one of the social workers from BCCS and during the first session he became tearful and said that he was unhappy at home. He was angry that his Dad had not returned from Nigeria. The social worker contacted his Mum who confirmed that his Dad had decided to stay in Nigeria with another family. Jake was unaware that his Dad had another family in Africa.

The social worker is helping Jake to manage his anger and is helping to support him and his family to come to terms with his Dad's decision to remain in Nigeria

Henry and his sister Emily live with their Mum in a refuge. They had to leave their home due to incidents of domestic violence. They have supervised contact with their Dad who lives in the family home. Emily is refusing to attend the contact sessions and this is causing additional conflict between her parents. The children have changed schools and are finding it difficult to adapt to their new surroundings. The social worker is working with the children to encourage them to talk about their feelings. She has explained her role to the children and their parents to ensure that they are aware that she is there to listen to the children and not to influence their feelings about their relationship with their parents.

The winner of last September's Balloon Race was Mrs. Edna Heinrich of Colchester. Her prize was two Hot Air balloon flights with Virgin Balloons.

## In the eye of the beholder

Throughout Mass, the little girl had been drawing busily on her sheet of paper. Not a colour in her pencil box was neglected as she used and discarded each one according to the needs of her mental image. As the church emptied, the priest came to her pew and asked what she was doing.

"I'm drawing God," she replied. The priest pointed out that no one knew what God looked like. The little girl's hand flew faster over the paper. "I know" she replied, without looking up. "I've not finished yet."

# Our Gift Aid Scheme

Our first and most important words are to say thank you to all who have made, and continue to make, donations to us. As you know, BCCS relies almost totally on your generosity and without you the Society would simply cease to exist.

Those of you who 'gift aid' your donations give us a significant additional source of income from the Inland Revenue. Under the Government's 'Gift Aid Scheme', we are able to recover the tax which you have already paid on your donation. For example, in 2004/5 we received gift-aided donations of £27,700. On this sum, we were able to claim back a further £7,800 of tax relief! In 2005/6, gift-aided donations increased to £30,500 on which we claimed and received a further £8,600 from the Inland Revenue! 2006/7 promises to be even better, thanks to more of you gift-aiding your donations and sponsorships at many of our fund raising events.

We'd like more of you to join the scheme of course! Who can join, and what do you have to do? It's very simple really – all you need to be is a taxpayer and all you need to do is to complete and sign the declaration below and send it to us – that's it. We hold the form here, record any donations you make and claim the tax relief.

Your donations can be small or large and it really doesn't matter how frequently or infrequently you make them. Also, signing the form will have no impact whatsoever on the amount of tax you pay, it simply gives us the right to reclaim the tax you would already have paid anyway on whatever donations you make.

If you haven't 'signed up' yet, would you consider doing so? We would really be most grateful.

Thanks again to all of you for your continuing support and generosity.

Ferdi Tisi

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<p><i>Gift Aid declaration.</i></p> <p><b>Brentwood Catholic Children's Society</b></p> <p><i>Registered Charity No. 1000661</i></p>				
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want the BCCS to treat all donations I have made since 6th April 2000 and all donations I make hereafter as Gift Aid donations and for the BCCS to reclaim the tax thereon until I notify you otherwise.				
Signature	.....Date .....			
Childcare House, Little Wheatley Chase, Rayleigh, Essex SS6 9EH				

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